Lawa Pronouns

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The term “Lawa” refers here to the language spoken by the Lawa people in Mae Hong Son province. Nowadays the Lawa live in Chiangmai and Mae Hong Son Provinces of Thailand. Their language belongs to the Palaungic branch of Mon–Khmer.

In this paper, I would like to outline the characteristics of Lawa personal pronouns, based on the La–up dialect of Mae Sariang district, Mae Hong Son province.

Lawa pronouns may be divided into two major groups: personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns. But in this paper I will limit myself to personal pronouns only.

a) First person pronouns

?ai? is used as singular first person pronoun ‘I’ and normally occurs in the subject and object positions, but sometimes in the possessor position.

1. ?ai? yu? mi?
   I see Mi
   ‘I see Mi.’

   Mi lazy see I
   ‘Mi hates me.’

   house I located here
   ‘My house is here.’

kɔ? ‘my’ occurs only as the possessor. It is used with almost all kinship terms, except pu? ‘younger sibling’, to show love or appreciation of the speaker to his family, cousins or relatives.

4. ma? kɔ?
   mother my
   ‘my mother’
5. yia? kə?
   grandmother my
   ‘my grandmother’

6. pia? kə?
   father my
   ‘my father’

Sometimes kə? co-occurs with ne? ‘ours’, but still preserves its original meaning. For example,

7. pia kə? ne?
   father my our
   ‘my father’

This is a set of allomorphs with the general form C₁V₁? also meaning ‘my’. The C₁ duplicates the Cₐ (final consonant) of the preceding word and the V₁ duplicates the V of the preceding word. The preceding noun may be either a noun or yuh ‘of’.

8. kuən so? ?o?
   grandchild my
   ‘my grandchild’

9. pu? ?u?
   younger sibling my
   ‘my younger sibling’

10. kuən na?
    child my
    ‘my child’

11. nansi yuh hu?
    book of my
    ‘my book’

12. mai yuh hu?
    money of my
    ‘my money’

When the preceding word is an open syllable the C₁V₁ become yə.

13. hmao yə?
    friend my
    ‘my friend’

14. phre yə?
    brother my
    ‘my brother’

This C₁V₁? form for ‘my’ is often used in the answer to a question.

    what located in bag you that
    ‘What is in your bag?’

    B: nansi yuh hu?
    book of my
    ‘My book.’
16. A: *hei mah pui*
   this be who
   ‘Who is this?’

B: *hməo yə?*
   friend my
   ‘My friend.’

*nei?* is used instead of *ʔai?* ‘I’ when the speaker wishes the hearer to do something for him. It probably means ‘to me’ and often occurs in the imperative clause.

17. *hoic nei?*
   come
   ‘Come to me.’

18. *kiəh nei?*
   give
   ‘Give to me.’

19. *tui sut nei?*
   bring mosquito net
   ‘Bring the mosquito net to me.’

*mo ?e?* is used as a plural first person pronoun ‘we’. Sometimes *mo* ‘group’ is dropped and *ʔe?* remains alone. Normally, it occurs in the subject or object positions but not in the possessor position.

20. *mo ?e? raot təo ləpug* — subject
   we dare not speak
   ‘We dare not speak.’

   mother my hit we
   ‘My mother hit us.’

*pe?* ‘our’ occurs only as the possessor. It is used when the speaker refers to himself and his family.

22. *krak pe?*
    buffalo our
    ‘our buffalo’

23. *kuən so? pe?*
    grandchild our
    ‘our grandchild’

*te?* is used as either first or third person pronoun. It refers back to the subject of the action no matter if it is singular or plural [see sec. c)].
b) Second person pronouns

*me? 'you' is used basically between men who are related to each other on the female side. For example, when a man speaks to his wife's brother, he can address him as *me?. In other cases, it is used between men who are not acquainted with each other to show respect. If *me? occurs in the final position of a question, it usually appears as the open syllable *me.

24. *sə həo *me? kəmə  
will go you where  
'Where will you go?'

25. *me *sə yuh *me  
what will do you  
'What will you do?'

*pa? 'you sg.' normally occurs in the subject or object positions. When it is sometimes in the possessor position, it indicates emphasis on the possessor.

26. leic yuh *pa?  
pig of you  
'your pig, not the pig of the other'

*pa? 'you' normally occurs as the possessor but not as the subject or object in a statement clause. But in a question, it can be the subject. It can be either singular or plural in the possessor position.

27. *paŋa? yuh *pa?  
orange of your  
'your orange'

28. *sə həo *pa? kəmə  
will go you where  
'Where will you go?'

*pa? differs from *pa? (when they occur as the possessor and *pa? is singular) in that *pa? is used when the possessor is emphasized.

29. *piə? *pa?  
house your  
'your house'

30. *piə? *pa?  
house your  
'your house, not the house of another'
mo pe? normally means 'you [plural]' but it is sometimes used as a singular conversationally between two youthful speakers or between a husband and a wife. It can be the subject, the object or the possessor.

31. ?ai\(?\) hrak mo pe? – object
    I love you(singular)
    'I love you.'

32. mo pe? sə həic niəmma – subject
    you will come when
    'When will you come?'

33. pəna? yuh mo pe? – possessor
    orange of you
    'your orange'

Sometimes only pe? by itself follows niə? 'house' as niə? pe? 'your house', and niə? pe? is often used as attribute of the preceding noun.

34. ðe nia? pe?
    chicken your house
    'chickens of your house'

35. broic nia? pe?
    chilli your house
    'chillies of your house'

There is no major difference between pə? 'you (plural)' and mo pe? 'you (plural)' when they occur in the possessor position. But it seems that pə? is more general than mo pe?.

36. khrak yuh pə? / mo pe?
    buffalo of you [plural]
    'your buffalo'

c) Third person pronouns

In Lawa there are no simple third person pronouns. The pronouns te? and ?i may be first or third person depending on their referent.

te? refers back to the subject of the action no matter if it is singular or plural. It occurs as the possessor; it can also as the subject of the second clause of a complex sentence.

37. ?ai\(?\) sə ðeïn niŋ niə? te? – possessor
    I will return to house my
    'I will go to my house.'
38. mo se həo ?mai ma? te? – possessor
group that go with mother their
‘They went with their mother’

Mi drink water before eat she
‘Mi drinks water before she eats rice.’

Sometimes te? is preceded by ti? ‘one’ to mean ‘self’. It occurs only as the subject of the second clause of a complex sentence.

I think not myself will come
niŋ rayum
to Mae Sariang
‘I have never thought that I would come to Mae Sariang.’

?i refers back to the subject of the action no matter if it is singular or plural. It occurs not only as the possessor but also as the subject in a complex sentence or a question.

41. mi? həo hoŋhiən ma? ?i paŋmu buk
Mi go school mother her but ride
pu? həo khən to? kat
prog. mk. go bicycle in market
‘Mi went to school but her mother is riding a bicycle to the market.’

42. daŋ ka som ?i maic ?i pu? ra?aom
Daeng before eat he must he drink water
‘Before Daeng eats, he must drink water.’

?i differs from te? in that:

1) ?i can be only a third person pronoun,

2) ?i can occur after a preposition bu te? cannot.

43. dah daŋ cho? leic se sə hlo̱h
if Daeng sell pig that will get
mai niŋ ?i həon
money from it many
‘If Daeng sells that pig, he will get much money.’

3) te? refers back to its subject. But te? can be replaced by ?i in the possessor position, if ?i is understood to refer to another by the speaker and the hearer.
44. *mi? hrak ma? te?*
   **Mi love mother her**
   'Mi loves her mother.'

45. *mi? hrak ma? ʔi*
   **Mi love mother his, her, their**
   'Mi loves the other's mother'

4) ʔi can occur as the subject in question but teʔ cannot.

46. *mi? mə pən ʔi*
   **Mi what eat she**
   'What did Mi eat rice with?'

Demonstrative phrases may also be used as pronouns, especially in the combinations pui ‘person’ or mo ‘group’ plus hei ‘this’, se ‘that (near)’, or sat ‘that (far)’. These phrasal pronouns may be used in subject, object, or possessor functions Pui se and mo se are more often used than the others. But in normal speech people are usually referred to by name or by a gero rather than by a pronoun.

47. *niə? pui se ʔaot kəmə*
   **house person that located where**
   'Where is his/her house?'

48. *mo se ʔaot təo nɪʔ niə?*
   **group that located not at house**
   'They don’t stay at home.'

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